THE STOP BINGE EATING PODCAST

with Kirstin Sarfde

Ep #292: If You're Afraid to Let Go of Food Restrictions

Hi! Let's jump right in and talk about being afraid when you let go of food restrictions.

Most people who binge eat have excessive eating restrictions and it's contributing to their binge eating.

And the kind of restriction I'll be focusing on today is the kind where you're not allowing yourself to eat the foods that you want to eat.

You don't allow yourself to eat foods that you like and that you want to eat because you think they are unhealthy, you think they're bad, you think they will cause you to gain weight, basically these are foods you think you shouldn't eat.

When you tell yourself you can't eat the food you want to eat for one of those reasons, or for a similar reason, you're going to feel deprived and restricted, maybe even resentful or sad or angry, and those are feelings that overtime will cause your desire for the foods to get stronger and stronger, and that strong desire will become an urge to binge on them.

When you deny yourself of what you want, and you're doing it for reasons that are basically you telling yourself you can't have them, then at some point you will likely rebel against this rule you have and no only will you eat the foods you're telling yourself you can't have but, you'll go overboard.

This will happen especially if when you're eating them you're telling yourself this is a one time thing, or that you'll never eat this again, or that you're going to be bad today and go back to good tomorrow. You're creating a sense of scarcity where you have to get it all in now, as much as you can while you can.

You might think that you're doing something good for yourself by restricting those foods, you might think it will stop you from gaining weight, or stop you from bingeing but because it creates a feeling of

deprivation, and all that I just described, it actually doesn't stop you from bingeing in the long run. It can actually do the opposite.

So one important thing that you need to do is to let go of these excessive restrictions.

That means that you're allowing yourself to eat the foods you want to eat, you're giving yourself full permission to eat them whenever you want to, and you're never telling yourself that you can't eat them, only that you either want to or don't want to and that you will or you won't.

You're making it your choice instead of forcing yourself to follow rules that you don't really want to follow. You're making empowered decisions based on what you want and don't want, not what you have been telling yourself you have to, can't, or shouldn't do.

When you do, you'll feel more relaxed about what you're eating, you won't feel so guilty about what you're eating, and you won't fall into the "one last time" eating because you'll be allowing yourself to eat them at any time.

Now, even though you can see the benefits of letting go of those restrictions, you might still feel hesitant to do it because of what you fear might happen when you do.

You might be afraid that if you let go of the restrictions then you'll just eat anything and everything whenever it's around you or whenever you think of it.

And there's a few things you need to know about this fear that you might have.

The first is that that's not what always happens to people. I've seen tons of people let go of the restrictions and not go crazy with the foods they'd been restricting. Instead, they just feel a sense of relief, freedom, and calmness, knowing that what they're eating is okay and allowed and it isn't going to be the last time they're allowed. And what ultimately happens when you feel that way is that you are more easily able to access your true wants rather than your wants that are coming from a place of feeling restricted.

Your wants when you tell yourself you can't have something are most likely going to sound different than your wants when you are telling yourself you can.

It's like not being invited to a party vs being invited. If you're not invited and you're saying you want to go, do you really want to go or are you only wanting to go because you've been restricted from going? Like you're rebelliously wanting to go to the party. Or you want to go because you've been told can't.

But if you are invited, you have permission and now from a permissive place you'll decide if you actually want to go or not. You'll be acting from you true wants, not rebellious wants.

When you're restricted from eating certain foods, you might want to eat foods from a rebellious place, foods that you might not even like that much, or just because they're there and available. When you're not restricted, you might have no desire to eat them. Or maybe you will have a desire to eat them, and you get to explore which it is.

So sometimes, people who let go of their excessive restrictions don't then go and excessively eat their formerly off-limits foods once they do.

That could be you. You won't know until you give it a shot.

But sometimes, there are people who go overboard when they've let go of their excessive restrictions.

And this is just a reaction to deprivation.

When you've been depriving yourself of something for a long time, in this case it's food, and now you're not anymore, at first, you might eat them excessively.

And that might be scary at first.

You might think that you're doing something wrong, or that letting go of those restrictions isn't helping, or that you're making your overeating and bingeing worse, or that you're going to gain weight.

And all of those are understandable fears.

But here's what you need to know.

You're not doing anything wrong. Again, this is a normal reaction to getting what you've been depriving yourself of.

Imagine if you were deprived of seeing your favorite people for years. Now you you have full access to them. You'd want to spend every minute with them, wouldn't you? You'd want to spend as much time as you could with them because you've missed them and you love them so much.

That's what's happening with the food you've been restricting. You want to enjoy what you've been missing out on and because you've been deprived of it, your desire is extremely high, so high that not only do you want it but you want a lot of it.

Also, even though it might not seem like it if this excessive eating is happening with you, it is going to help you. What's not going to help you is doing what's been causing you to feel deprived, restricted, resentful, sad, and angry for all those years, which is not giving yourself unconditional permission to eat them.

And although it might seem like your overeating and bingeing is getting worse, know that it might just be temporarily getting worse before it gets better.

Here's what I mean by that.

Going back to the example with your favorite people.

At first, you might want to spend every second of your time with them. You don't want to take bathroom breaks, you don't want to sleep. But as time goes on, and as you're realizing, and it's sinking in, and it's becoming more real to you that you now have full access to them, your desire to spend all of your time with them decreases. You're no longer in a place of scarcity where you have to get it all in while you can, you're now in a place of abundance and you can let them go knowing you'll see them

again soon. The novelty wears off and your desire isn't as strong. Those people just become a regular part of your life, not a "just this one day and never again," thing.

When you first start eating those foods you'd been making off limits and that you'd been denying yourself of, you might want to eat them often. And you might not want to stop. But as time goes on and as you're realizing, and it's sinking in, and it's becoming more real to you that you now have full access to the foods, your desire for them decreases. You're no longer in a place of scarcity where you have to get it all in while you can, you're now in a place of abundance and you'll be okay taking breaks from eating the food, knowing that you can and will eat them again soon. The novelty wears off and your desire isn't as strong. That food just becomes a regular part of your life, not a "just this one day and never again," thing.

Now, you might want to know how long that process takes, how long it will take for the novelty to wear off, for your desire to decrease, and for you to get out of the scarcity mindset and into abundance.

And I can't tell you how long it will take. It's different for everyone.

But what will have a huge impact on the amount of time it takes is what you are telling yourself throughout the process.

You can allow yourself to eat those foods while still telling yourself you're doing something wrong or bad or that you shouldn't be eating them. When you're doing that, when you're eating those foods but you're not letting go of the restrictive mindset that you've been holding onto even though you're letting go of the restrictive actions, you're still setting yourself up to binge. With this process, the mindset is the most important part. It doesn't matter how often you're actually eating the foods, it's matters what you're thinking about eating and not eating those foods. That's what needs to change here because it's your thoughts that are causing all those feelings I've been talking about and your feelings are what will drive either overeating and binge eating or will drive relaxed, calm, content eating.

The sooner you move away from the restrictive thoughts you've been telling yourself, the "can'ts," "shouldn'ts," and "have tos," the sooner you will be more relaxed with your eating which means you'll be moving away from deprivation reaction eating and will be eating how you truly want to be eating.

And the other reason why it might be scary, which is a big reason for a lot of people, is because there is a fear of gaining weight.

And if you are one of the people who does have the deprivation reaction and who binges and overeats on the foods for awhile at first, then weight gain might happen.

And this is what I want you to ask yourself.

Is it more important right now, that you stop binge eating or don't gain weight?

I totally get it if you want both. But, if you're more focused on not gaining weight than you are on stopping binge eating, then you might end up perpetuating the binge eating.

The truth is, for some people, when they let go of their excessive restrictions, they do gain weight.

It doesn't happen for everyone but, it does happen.

And if it happens for you, and you freak out and start restricting again so you don't gain weight, then those restrictions could cause you to feel urges to binge, driving you to binge, and then you're in this constant cycle of gain weight, restrict to lose it, and binge it back.

So it's important that you focus on letting go of those restrictions, and stopping binge eating, and then once you do, you can work on managing your weight.

Now, I know it might be hard for you to be okay with gaining weight.

We've all been conditioned to think a certain way about what it means to gain weight, what it means about our bodies if they're bigger, what it means about us if we've gained weight.

So take a few minutes to explore what you make it mean if you gain weight. Find the beliefs you have about gaining weight.

You'll probably see that you have some negative thoughts about you being in a bigger body, what you think about yourself in a bigger body, and what you think about bigger bodies.

You might think that if you gain weight you'll be ugly or gross, that it will mean you're lazy or out of control, or something else that is negative.

But thinking this way about gaining weight while you're in this circumstance and are letting go of restrictions so you can stop binge eating is just one option.

You also have the option of accepting weight gain as part of the process. You can think of it as you taking steps toward stopping binge eating. You can tell yourself that you are still the same person if you gain weight, which is true. You are just as good. You can be accepting of your body. You can tell yourself that you are healing in your mind and in your body and that your body's size doesn't define your success.

You have options, and when you are more accepting of the weight gain and of your body, and when you accept that it is part of the process, then you will be more okay with it, and you won't try to run from it, and cut out all the foods, and undo that work you're doing to let go of restrictions so you can stop binge eating.

And also, I've actually done a few podcast episodes about weight gain if you want more help with this.

#43: When You've Gained Weight
#59: Fear of Weight Gain
#177: Your Thoughts About Gaining Weight

So, I know this can be scary but stick with it. Don't get scared if you gain weight or if you overeat or if you binge and then go back to excessively restricting. That's not going to help you. You've already proven that.

Give less restrictions a try and ease your fears by reminding yourself that you're not doing anything wrong, that this will help you, that the excessive desire to eat those foods is temporary, that if weight gain happens it is just part of the process, you're not failing, and it doesn't mean anything negative

about you. It is a stepping stone toward you having your ideal eating habits and ideal mindset around food.

So when you let go of the excessive restrictions, you might just start eating those foods normally.

Or you might overeat, or binge on them at first but if you're working on how you think about those foods and about eating those foods, so you're making it okay to eat them, giving yourself permission, and are allowing them, then it will ease up over time.

And the last thing I want to say about the fear that if you let go of the restrictions then you'll just eat anything and everything whenever it's around you or whenever you think of it, is that you are not letting go of every eating restriction that you have.

You're letting go of excessive restrictions, restrictions that cause you to feel deprived, restricted, resentful, guilty, sad, or angry.

You're not letting go of restrictions that help you to feel your best physically.

This is where people get it wrong when it comes to stopping restricting.

They think they need to live their life without any restrictions with their eating and that's not how it should be.

So I'm not telling you to just eat whatever whenever and have no restrictions.

What about the restriction of stopping eating when you're full? That *is* a restriction. You're restricting the amount of food that you're eating.

Or what about restricting the amount of certain types of foods that you're eating because when you eat too much of them you don't feel physically good? I know for me, that's a restriction I want to have with certain foods.

So you're not eating restriction-free, you're just letting go of the ones that you don't want to have and are keeping the ones that you do.

You're letting go of anything that involves what you think you can't, shouldn't, or have to eat, and are keeping the ones that you want to have that are what's best for your mental health, your well-being, and for you body.

So when I talk about letting go of the excessive restrictions, you're not just going to eat anything and everything whenever it's around you or whenever you think of it because you're going to take into account how your body will feel.

You're not just going to do whatever you want because you, meaning in your mind, aren't the only one affected by your decisions.

Your body is too.

Sure you might think you want to just eat all the food but when you consider how your body will feel, is that what you *really* want?

I doubt it.

So if you're one of those people who eats excessively when you let go of the excessive restrictions, you're going to do more considering of your body and how it will feel.

How your body feels matters. You care about how it feels.

So tell yourself the truth about how it will feel if you eat that food or if you eat more.

And at first you might not care because you're just so caught up in eating what you haven't been allowing yourself to eat for so long, until you're done eating, and then you do care.

But over time, you're going to work on reminding yourself of what you do care about, and that includes your body and how it will feel. And then you'll be making your decisions about what you're going to eat and how much based on what you want and what will leave your body feeling good too.

Alright, so I hope that helps to ease some of your fears about letting go of restrictions.

Again, you're not letting them all go, just the excessive ones. Keep the ones that make you feel good, that make your body feel good.

And have faith in the process. Fear might come up but, feel the fear and do it anyway, reminding yourself of what I talked about in this episode. There is no exact timeline but, if you're doing the mental work, your desire for excessively eating those foods will decrease, which means, so will the bingeing.

Alright, I'll talk to you next time. Bye bye!